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I want to thank Solomon, Moses, all those who participated in the Northeast rail bill enacted Jan. 2. Unbelievably complex, those who prevailed, those whose opinions lost, those who compromised, in face-to-face consultation all have contributed to a grand work honoring democracy, labor, management, government-capita cooperation. And explained so us poor slobs can understand it in the Feb'74 issue of Fortune, as RTN told us, with the passenger part still to come. I should add that AAR's Stephen Ailes also helped Amtrak come into being on schedule, when delay would have meant chaos, disaster. --Robert J. Swan, transit leadership - public transit catalyst, Box 1866, Long Beach CA 90801.

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A SPECIAL TURBO BUTTON!! Large 3" size, AMTRAK logo, and the wording, "The Turbos are Coming." Buy several to help tell people of the Corridor Turbine Trains. Postpaid sample $1, or 4 for $3, or 7 for $5, from Julie Ann Kreunen, 305 Yosemite Trail, Parkwood Hills, Madison, Wisc. 53705.

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rail travel newsletter

FEB 19 RECD

30¢

VOL. 4 NO. 3
FIRST ISSUE OF
FEBRUARY 1974
#77

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ON THE COVER:

Amtrak train 704, the eastbound BLUE RIDGE, waits at Cumberland, Maryland last Dec. 30 as passengers load for the trip to Washington. Two B&O diesel units, a GP-9 and a GP-7, head the consist. Ken Maylath made the photo and wrote the article on the train which appears in this issue.

LETTERS

After having read four issues of RTN, I can say with no doubt that I look forward more to it than any other of the several railroad-oriented publications I receive. Most major railroad magazines view passenger service in the past with nostalgia, in the present with near contempt, and in the future with despair. Your constructively critical approach to Amtrak and genuine enjoyment of and enthusiasm for passenger trains is a refreshing relief.

After a relatively long Christmas train trip using several trains, most crowded, it seems to me that there is a need for education of the public on the way to enjoy train travel. So many of the people on the train seemed to labor under the impression that they were strapped into their automobile or an airplane--they stared morosely at the seat ahead of them, moving around only when necessary. One of the major advantages of trains is the opportunity to move around--to the diner, the lounge car, a dome car, and so on. It seems to me that Amtrak could make a campaign to help these new riders appreciate the unique opportunities train travel offers. For our family, particularly my two young sons, the vacation starts the minute we get on the train.

Even the poor old GEORGE WASHINGTON/JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY is benefitting from the energy crisis. This train, which usually has two coaches (one to and from Newport News), a diner and a sleeper, now seems regularly to carry at least one additional coach, and is usually fairly crowded. (Just before Christmas it left Charlottesville going west with no less than nine cars and standing room only, and I overheard several C&O men on the platform expressing utter astonishment at the length of the train.) Its major problem is chronic lateness. It is scheduled to arrive at Charlottesville from Chicago at 9:55am. Usually it gets here between 2 and 2:30pm. That is a serious problem in the other direction in particular, because arriving in Chicago 4-4½ hours late means that most connecting trains are missed. This regular and excessive tardiness seems to be due primarily to the re-routing thru Indiana necessitated by the condemnation of its former Penn Central route. Shortly after the FRA's action, the train was routed on a C&O freight line from Cincinnati to Chicago, bypassing Indianapolis. It then arrived in Charlottesville ahead of schedule (an unheard of event), but had to revert to revert to the Richmond-Indianapolis-Logansport route due to pressures from the C&O and/or Indiana politicians (I've heard both stories). In any event, the lengthening of the schedule and the moving of at least the Washington departure time to, say, 4:00 would remove some of the frustration often experienced with this train.

Thomas F. Miller

Charlottesville, Virginia

HOW TO ADVERTISE IN RTN: Express Ads cost just 25¢ per line (minimum $1.00); count 80 typewriter spaces per line, and send remittance to Message Media, Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709. Display ads (camera-ready copy) are $10 for full 5x8" page; $5 half page; $2.50 quarter page; $1.25 eighth page.

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AMTRAK'S NEW EXPERIMENTAL ROUTE
RAIL TRAVELERS VOTE FOR SERVICE THRU

CLEVELAND

RESPONSES TO RTN'S SURVEY

In the last two issues we asked readers to send us their "votes" for the next experimental route that should be operated by Amtrak. Under present law, the Dept. of Transportation must designate a new route each year which shall be operated for two years to gauge public acceptance; if successful, it would be included in the permanent Amtrak system.

While votes are still coming in, there are enough to provide statistically stable results, and we are presenting this early report because of time pressures and the need for public input into governmental plans now being formulated.

The vote given the "winner" of this survey was very clear: rail travelers favor by a sound margin the restoration of passenger train service between Chicago and the East Coast via Cleveland, the former New York Central "Water Level Route." Of the votes received, 42% favored this route. Second and third place favorites were very close percentage-wise, with 13% wanting a Los Angeles-Las Vegas-Salt Lake City-Ogden train, and 11% favoring Portland-Denver. The remaining 34% of the vote was distributed among a number of other new routes which we will describe here on a later occasion. Readers clearly understood this vote as being for new routes, not for augmentation of service on existing routes, and thus the count cannot be taken as reflecting public sentiment about addition of new trains on present routes.

All respondents gave their names and addresses, so we could tabulate where the votes originated. Of those favoring the new Chicago-New York/Boston train, 52% were from the Midwest, 17% from the East, 17% from the West, and 13% from the South.

There were, of course, minor variations in routes proposed, and we lumped votes into the closest categories to obtain consensus. One very popular variation on the route via Cleveland was to include a Detroit-Toledo connecting train. Most voters made no great distinction in whether the East Coast endpoint of the route should be New York or Boston, many apparently regarding the Northeast Corridor as a unity and assuming that riders on the proposed train could reach either point easily. However, the route was clearly laid out: Chicago-Toledo-Cleveland-Buffalo-Rochester-Syracuse-Albany-Springfield-Boston with or without a branch to New York.

Clearly the most important point made by voters favoring the "winning" route was that Cleveland requires Amtrak service. This large metropolitan area has been without Amtrak since Jan. 5, 1972, when Amtrak discontinued the Chicago-New York LAKE SHORE because of lack of state financial support. Amtrak had introduced the train on May 10, 1971 as an experimental addition to its basic system. "Honestly now, is there a choice?" asks one Cleveland reader as a comment accompanying his vote.

Here are samples of other comments: Frank G. Tatnall of Plymouth Meeting, PA writes, "you should be aware that a vital ten-mile link in the former route (the old Boston & Albany main between Post Road and Rensselaer, NY) has been removed pursuant to ICC abandonment proceedings. Unless restored, the removal of this line makes it virtually impossible to operate a direct service via PC from Boston to Buffalo and west without completely bypassing the existing Albany-Rensselaer station. East-west freight traffic moves via the Selkirk Yard several miles to the south of Albany." A Toledo reader points out that the Pennsylvania DOT released a recent report on a proposed LAKE SHORE service, and figured that the train could realize a $2 million profit in its second year of operation. The state also

proposed a timetable for the train: lv Boston 6:30pm, Cleveland 9:10am, ar Chicago 2:50pm; lv Chicago 2pm, Cleveland 9pm, Boston 11:55am. Thru cars would leave New York westbound at 9pm and arrive from Chicago at 9:50am. The Northeast Transportation Coalition, a consumer organization, (Box 666, Meriden, CT 06450) has been actively seeking restoration of this service also, and Senator Taft of Ohio has introduced legislation asking for it.

Finally, a comment from reader Donald W. MacLean of Concord, CA: "Before we get too engrossed in the charade of selecting 'experimental' routes for Amtrak to adopt at the rate of one per year, it might be well to consider that the transportation crisis is NOW. It would be more in keeping with our national needs to choose as quickly as possible a hundred routes where railroad passenger service is desirable and then start a crash program to provide that service."

TWO NEW AMTRAK ROUTES FINALLY WILL GET GOING

Just after our last issue was out, Amtrak announced (Feb. 4) that the San Joaquin Valley train and the St. Louis-Laredo train would commence operations next month.

The SAN JOAQUIN, trains 710 and 711, will have its first runs March 6 from Oakland and Bakersfield, CA. There may be an inaugural press run on March 5. Train 710 leaves Oakland at 10am and runs on SP track to Port Chicago where it switches to the Santa Fe for the run to Bakersfield. Buses connect San Francisco & Oakland and Los Angeles & Bakersfield. Consist will be two coaches and a lunch counter diner (no checked baggage.) Train 711 leaves Bakersfield at 11:30am and reaches Oakland 6pm. Intermediate stops are Martinez, Stockton, Riverbank (Modesto), Merced, Fresno, and Hanford. The Bakersfield-L.A. bus makes a stop at Pasadena, with southbound L.A. arrival at 7:15. Northbound the bus leaves LAUPT at 8:15am. There was no indication that the newly-opening Martinez station would become a stop for the COAST STARLIGHT and SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR. Passengers will connect with the STARLIGHT at Oakland. The Oakland-Bakersfield fare is $14. Amtrak said the Santa Fe route was chosen because it serves Stockton directly and reaches more population than the SP route.

Tri-weekly service begins southbound from St. Louis on March 13 on Amtrak's second new route, the train being combined with the existing INTER-AMERICAN. First northbound run leaves Laredo, TX March 15. The train leaves St. Louis Sun., Wed., Fri., and Laredo Sun., Tues., Fri. for the overnight run. The train runs over 3 railroads: MoPac between St. Louis and Texarkana; T&P between Texarkana and Fort Worth; Santa Fe Fort Worth to Milano; and MoPac Milano to Laredo. The train runs St. Louis, Little Rock, Dallas, Fort Worth, San Antonio, Laredo, and also serves Poplar Bluff, MO, and Marshall, Longview, Cleburne, McGregor, Temple, Austin, San Marcos, TX. Connections with the NATIONAL LIMITED and Turboliners will be available at St. Louis.

Funds to help operate both these trains were voted by Congress and made available in Fiscal 1974 after earlier impoundment by the White House.

THE ADMINISTRATION'S NEW TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM

President Nixon on Feb. 9 made a radio address to the nation on the subject of transportation in which he made what may have been his first public praise of the role of Amtrak, in recounting the Administration's prior work on transportation: "We have created Amtrak, a new corporation to improve passenger service on the nation's railways; and last year there was a 14% increase in rail passengers." The rest of his talk outlined plans for federal funding of public transportation. He promised to send Congress a plan for a Unified Transportation Assistance Program which would make available $16 billion over the next 6 years for metropolitan and rural public transportation assistance, with states and local areas deciding how 2/3 of the funds should be spent. Nixon emphasized the desirability of flexibility in transportation, of energy conservation, and of environmental preservation in his Administration's plans.

TWO MORE AMTRAK DERAILMENTS REPORTED

The SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR derailed eastbound at Stratton, Nebraska, 225 miles west of Lincoln at 7:40pm Feb. 12, the last 5 cars hitting the ground. Reports said 16-20 passengers had minor injuries. The remaining cars continued on to Chicago. The derailed cars were ATK 4521, UP 6200, ATK 8094 diner, Burlington 450, and ATK 2656. The cause of the derailment, on BN tracks, was not immediately known.

Amtrak's Chicago-St. Louis STATE HOUSE derailed near Mitchell, IL Jan. 11 with 16 people aboard and apparently no serious injuries.

Urban-Suburban Transit

ERIE-LACKAWANNA ORDERED TO CONTINUE CLEVELAND COMMUTER RUNS

The Ohio Public Utilities Commission on Jan. 24 ordered the EL to continue running its Cleveland-Youngstown commuter service, which the railroad had announced it would drop Feb. 15. The energy crisis was named as one of the reasons for the order.

CLEVELAND-COLUMBUS-CINCINNATI HIGH-SPEED RAIL SERVICE DISCUSSED

A movement is afoot to bring rapid transit to connect the three C's of Ohio, and Amtrak official David Watts was called in to testify about its feasibility. Amtrak could apparently provide the service by means of a 2/3 state subsidy. Repair of the PC track on the route would cost $75 million, Watts estimated. Early 1975 would be the first possible starting date, given these repairs and the time to hunt up some equipment. A consulting firm reported that trains could make the trip in 4 hours, serving over 7.5 million people who live within 40 miles of the line.

UPGRADING OF SOUTHERN PACIFIC COMMUTE SERVICE?

The Metropolitan Transportation Commission has approved a 6-month, $75,000 study to determine the feasibility of improving SP commuter service on San Francisco's peninsula. $50,000 of the funds are coming from UMTA. The study will make recommendations about possible public financial assistance to the railroad and what level of service would be most desirable as an alternative to a BART-type operation.

CONTINUED EFFECTS OF GASOLINE SHORTAGE

The Administration is trying to get around federal rationing of gasoline, and is urging states and localities to set up their own rationing-by-license-number system, as pioneered by Oregon. The Federal Energy Office has proposed a rationing plan that would give relatively more gasoline to areas where rapid transit facilities are few, such as Los Angeles and Dallas, and in the view of some, thereby perpetuating the transportation problem. In the meantime, New York, New Jersey, Washington DC, Washington, Masachusetts, Hawaii, and parts of North Carolina, West Virginia, Florida and Pennsylvania have adopted gasoline allocation plans, most of which follow Oregon's lead in permitting sales on alternate days based upon odd-even license numbers.

TRANSIT BRIEFS: About 1000 fewer traffic fatalities occurred in 1973 than forecast because of lower speeds and reduced mileage due to the energy crisis, reports the National Safety Council... Maryland established Jan. 21 a special rail division of its Dept. of Transportation to cope with "emergency" rail transportation problems... The sluggish San Francisco Muni and the equally sluggish BART have finally arranged a transfer system between the two transportation units which will come into operation next July 1... Half-fare Sundays on the PC's New Haven line will be continued 6 months beyond January, the Connecticut Dept. of Transportation has decided, due to the plan's popularity since it began in December... A 3-year demonstration period of expanded B&O commuter service between Pittsburgh and McKeesport-Versailles starting this spring has been cleared by the Port Authority. The continued subsidies will allow for lengthening of existing commuter trains and addition of three new runs...

canadian news letter

THE LITTLE RAILWAYS in Canada, four in particular, were covered last issue in Gil Hulin's article. He asked for information on others: the Quebec, North Shore & Labrador; the Canada & Gulf Terminal; and the Greater Winnipeg Water District Railways. Reader Tom Goodlake of Vancouver reminds us of the availability of the Canadian Guide, published monthly by International Railway Publ. Co., Ltd., 480 Lagauchetiere St. W., Montreal, P.Q. H2Z 1E3, at $10 per copy, $28 per year. The Jan. issue indicates that the QNS&L carries passengers between Sept Iles and Schefferville, Que., and from Ross Bay Jct. to Labrador City, Newfoundland. The C&GT runs trains 2 & 3 between Mont Joli and Matane, Quebec, a 36-mile, 1hr 20min trip, with schedules in the Guide. The GWWD hauls riders between St. Boniface and Waugh, Manitoba, a 92-mile trip done in 3¼ hours (schedules in the Guide).

EDITORIALIZING ABOUT TRAINS, the Toronto Globe and Mail (Jan. 11) calls for a more positive approach to the passenger train situation in Canada. "Instead of lurching from fare increase to fare increase (CP Rail citing the practice of Canadian National Railways, and vice-versa), should we not be following up a more positive prophecy--one that declares a railway renaissance is upon us?" asks the newspaper. The immediate stimulus for the editorial was CP Rail's announcement of planned Jan. 15 fare increases, but the paper named broader concerns: "...today's considerations of fuel conservation, concern for the environment, and efficiency in conveying large numbers, make it all the more urgent" that the present process be reversed.

CANADIAN TRANSPORT COMMISSION on Feb. 1 ordered the CN to establish a new run, a Toronto-Barrie commuter train. The CTC can do this under the National Transportation Act of 1967, but it marked the first time new passenger service was so established, and as the CTC noted, was unique in that the application came from the general public. One question now is whether other Canadian cities will try to gain similar service from the "feds."

A HORRIBLE INCIDENT occurred in Montreal's subway Jan. 23: Exploding and burning rubber tires on a subway train in the morning rush hour set off black, acrid smoke that miraculously caused no fatalities but caused the hospitalization of several passengers as over 600 riders were led to safety thru a smoke-filled tunnel. On Dec. 9, 1971 another such fire destroyed 36 subway cars and killed a train operator, causing $7.5 million damage and closing two stations for over a month. After the 1971 incident, experts made recommendations to Montreal for safety measures, but they had not yet been initiated.

CP RAIL RAISED ferry fares on the Vancouver-Nanaimo, B.C. run. Foot passengers may board for $3; and rates for passengers boarding as riders in autos go up from $2 to $2.50. Auto rates go from $5 to $6. The "Princess of Vancouver," being refitted with new engines, missed its startup date of Jan. 16 by a week, on the run. Practically no work was done on the ship's passenger appointments.

CANADIAN NATIONAL'S TURBOTRAINS are finally proving themselves on the Montreal-Toronto run, after seven years of frustration. They have been running without incident and have been doing heavy business since the Rapido backup trains were removed Jan. 9. Rapidos were being added Friday and Sunday afternoons, leaving one minute after the 4:30pm Turbo departures those days because of large crowds. Turbos are said to be sold out most days, and CN has a shortage of coaches besides. The extra weekend Rapidos will have only dinette cars and coach equipment. In addition to these trains, the BONAVENTURE still leaves at 4:50pm.

ENDING THE YEAR ON AMTRAK

by Peter Putnam Bretz

The end of 1973 was approaching like lightning, and the train-riding bug was biting again. With that excuse, and a whim to exceed 14,000 miles for the year, I embarked on a 388-mile cruise (395 if one believes Amtrak's timetables), all on trains that either originate or terminate at Los Angeles. I was able to sample and compare all train service to Southern California.

I chose Christmas day for my escapade as, I reasoned, patronage would be light. It wasn't.

Pushing thru the doors of Los Angeles Union Passenger Terminal for perhaps the 400th time, I was once again overwhelmed with a feeling of purpose. Yes, here is where the railroad gets things done--leather chairs, solid wood ticket areas, beamed ceilings--no nonsense here. "Get on with it, Amtrak, you've got people to carry." Spaciousness and purpose. Yes, that was it--even on Dec. 25 when everyone else was home opening presents.

But 100 or so other hardy souls were already waiting. A third took the STARLIGHT, 2/3 went on the SAN DIEGAN. Up on the platform to watch #13 depart. Usual consist: 2 SDP45s, baggage, dorm, 4 coaches, ex-Santa Fe lunch counter lounge (Amtrak 8116 this day), 4 more coaches, 3330 lounge, 8033 diner, "Pine Range," "Blue Moon," and "Placid Haven." The last car was an 11-bedroom ex-UP sleeper. Platinum mist looked good on Pullman-Standard smooth sides. Waiting for all to load, why look! Here comes the SUPER CHIEF, gliding into the station 45 minutes late. Three new Amtrak SDP-40Fs heading up 5 high-level coaches, and 5 sleepers, some not refurbished, but all except one ex-SP 10/6 were ex-Santa Fe cars. Some passengers made the transfer to #13, but not many. After shouts and waves, the COAST STARLIGHT pulled out 2 minutes behind time with all cars save one sporting dirty windows. The one exception was a newly-painted coach. (On the next return trip, "Blue Moon" and "Placid Haven" would end up on their sides along interstate 5 at Anderson, California.)

My train was the SAN DIEGAN this 70-degree Christmas morning. The equipment was fresh up from San Diego on a quick turnaround and was scheduled to leave at 10:30am. This was to be my first ride behind a new Amtrak engine, and I was waiting to compare its performance with the 3 other types of motive power I've experienced on this run: First, the FP7s, of course--don't call them 9s; they'll always be war-bonnet 7s to me. Then, in 1968 I did a turn with a U30GC. I'll remember that engine as very rough on the transition. And who can forget the smoky, growling, photogenic (and mostly dirty) Alco PAs? Oh yes--once I went down to Fullerton behind a yellow and silver war-bonneted '7. Today #516 on the point towered over its charge. The first car was "Silver Buffet" refurbished baggage-lounge with name removed, followed by Amtrak 4827 with the new airline-type seats, Santa Fe 2826, and 5 SP Pullman-Standard cars. The latter were an interesting mix: SP 2395 (48-seat high windows for the SHASTA DAYLIGHT), SP 2242 and 2243, both 76-seat chair cars. These were originally SP 3002 & 3003 27-seat parlor cars with stateroom built for the 1941 MORNING DAYLIGHT (rebuilt in 1954 & 1964 respectively). Then came SP 2241, a complete DAYLIGHT tavern car when built in 1941 (original #10317), but in 1963 86 reclining seats were jammed in. From the outside this car shows 3 low windows between the high ones. Finally, there was SP 2385, a SHASTA DAYLIGHT car with a mere 36 seats plus crew room. All the SP cars rode very well and were comfortable despite their age.

On departure it took 5 minutes to back up to Mission Tower and get going

forward toward San Diego. Rocking along later at about 70, the Amtrak unit was pulling smoothly. Takeoff from each stop was steady and strong, with not a jolt or a yank the whole way. And I liked the horn. No, not like steam--it's like a diesel, yet melodious and pleasing. Worthy.

The last 2 cars were empty, with a smattering of people in the others. The most popular car was the one with the new seats. "Silver Buffet" was packed. By the time I reached the snack counter, all the sweet rolls were gone, so I settled for coffee and Amtrak almonds.

Past a grove of eucalyptus trees near Irvine, speed was clocked at slightly over 80mph. Effortless with the big Amtrak engine. Most of the train emptied at Oceanside and Del Mar. Beautiful ocean running, looking down on people walking along the almost deserted beaches. We were about 10 minutes late, but made up 5 of them between Del Mar and the end of the line. Just out of town, the northbound train, which left San Diego at 1pm, passed us on the left-hand main with a consist similar to ours. Coasting to a stop at the beautiful Santa Fe station, we were just 4 minutes down, and 128 miles were completed.

This equipment, having left this point at 7am and completed a round trip, will turn around and go back up to L.A. as train #775 and wait overnight at LAUPT. The other set of cars left L.A. on the 8am schedule, got to San Diego and left again at 1pm. After its arrival in L.A. again, it waits from 3:35pm to 7:55pm and comes back down to spend the night at the south end of the line. Each set makes 1½ roundtrips daily and lays over at a different city each night. This arrangement makes it easy for another train to be scheduled as it was last summer.

After lunch I wandered back to the station for the 4:30pm departure. There were many passengers jamming the waiting room, with about 100 boarding. I made sure that private car "Victoria" was still on the house track (along with heavyweight Pullman "Centeburn"), and it was off and running back to Los Angeles.

There were high praises for the new Amtrak seats, with fold-down and -out trays, fur-covered foot rests and baggage racks, and attractive slipcovers. Drawbacks: the center arm rest remains rigid, preventing sleeping a small child crosswise; and no place for hat checks. Overall, tho, they were well-liked and well received by travelers. The trays are the big advantage. And after about 2½ hours the seats remained comfortable.

Our train snaked thru Rose Canyon and got back to the Pacific Ocean. We picked up about 75 people at Del Mar and 50 at Oceanside. Ten people boarded at San Clemente. During these stops, palm trees were silhouetted by the brilliant sunset across the water. I couldn't help thinking about that old Union Pacific sleeper "Ocean Sunset" in which my wife and I had a compartment during our honeymoon. The car is now with Autotrain.

The sweet-sounding blasts of the #516 reverberated thru the track noises as the train clicked past 80 on that stretch near Irvine. A quick trip to "Silver Buffet" got me a small bottle of Almaden Chablis which slid around on the seat tray but didn't spill. Santa Ana netted us 40 more people, but I forgot to make the count at Fullerton. Many faces were familiar, having spent the day in Orange County points to return on the train.

At Union Station, an on-time arrival and jammed with trains. In fact, every single train out of L.A. was represented. Our SAN DIEGAN, the SUPER CHIEF about to leave, the COAST STARLIGHT having just arrived, the other SAN DIEGAN equipment boarding passengers, and even the SUNSET LIMITED's consist was waiting, darkened, for a 9pm pullout.

An across-the-platform transfer to #4, the same equipment that arrived this morning turned and cleaned and ready to go. The station platform lights sparkled along the fluted sides of the high-level coaches, creating a festive atmosphere. Yes, the sailing of the SUPER is still the most exciting one in L.A. Seven thirty-two and wheels a-rolling.

The 3 big SDP40F units were into the third notch right away. Five sleepers eased past with a baggage car bringing up the rear. Of course, the dome car was included. After the red light disappeared from sight, I walked back down into the waiting room and listened to Christmas music coming over the P.A. system. The energy shortage was making itself known here, as the large ceiling lights were dimmed, creating a warm half-light in the station. A good 65-70 were waiting for the SUNSET LIMITED to be called. I sat in a comfortable leather-backed chair thinking back to the long-past days when announcements would come on like: "Your attention please. Sleeping car passengers for the LARK, please check in at gate G," or "Last call for Union Pacific train No. 5, the UTAHAN for Salt Lake City," or even "Train leaving on track 5 for Anaheim, Azusa, and Cucamonga."

Finally, the SUNSET was announced, and we all walked and pushed our luggage carts down the long tunnel under the tracks to track 10. Sleepers to the right, coaches to the left. Up on the platform, a mixture of high-level and conventional cars. "Is this the train to El Paso?" Yes, it is; what car do you want? "Uh, let me see, car 0211." That's up 3 cars, ma'am. The train was still plugged in, but all supplies seemed to be loaded and ready to go. The consist? FP7s A-A-B-A, with SP 6461 on the point. Deadhead NP Lewis & Clark Traveller's Rest #498; Amtrak baggage 1022, two 52-seat chair cars, 5 high-level coaches; 8381 (lunch counter lounge, ex-C&EI "Merry Meeting," ex-Maine Central); 3390 (ex-Santa Fe dorm-lounge); 8041 (ex-Santa Fe diner); "Regal Creek" (4-bdrm, 2-cmpt-2-drawing rm, being sold as 8 bedrooms; "Palm Star" (10/6), and "Pacific Home" 10/6), all cars refurbished except the NP deadhead.

We left on the dot. My passage was secured only as far as Pomona, and I elected to ride most of the 32 miles in lounge cars. Car 3390 has been completely redone inside. The old Santa Fe felt-plush lounge chairs were gone, and new, low-slung modern vinyl & steel ones were in place instead. Fairly comfortable. The new tables are wider near the windows than at the aisle, and have 4 holes in the center to support drinks. It held my 7-Up container and can nicely. Very gaudy, tho, with orange and purple pronounced. The music system worked (for this car only), playing rock tunes.

In "Merry Meeting" two things were wrong. The car attendant told me the water hadn't been turned on, and would I see to it at Alhambra. The second point became apparent when a young kid came in and mentioned that he nearly fell off the train coming thru. I checked, and sure enough, both traps were left open--and this was between the lounge and all the coaches. I closed them immediately.

On the platform at Alhambra, I looked along the undercarriage of the car for the water valve, but it was on the other side. No time to find it before we left. And at Pomona the platforms were again on the left side.

One high-level coach was empty, and those on either side full. The car attendant in one of the 52-seat cars had put out the pillows on each seat so passengers boarding would find all the comforts of home awaiting them. A few minutes out of Pomona the train passed the campus of Cal Poly University, my old stamping grounds. I could just make out the Spanish-style stable where Kellogg kept his Arabian horses and where I used to watch the SUNSET-GOLDEN STATE move by like a glowworm in the night. Then, the SP station at Pomona, where the agent used to deny all existence of #39 and 40, the "Ghost Trains." No. 2 whistled off at 10:03pm, a mere 13 minutes late--par for the course. I walked thru Christmas night to the Travelodge. My tally showed 288 miles ridden today.

Next morning, 40 degrees and No. 1 reported 4 hours late. I took a taxi to north Pomona and the Santa Fe. All wasn't well here either, for the agent allowed that No. 3 was

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THROUGH THE ANTEBELLUM NORTH TO GRANDE CENTRE

by Glenn Lee

A friend from Ottawa who grew up in New Brunswick worked his way thru University waiting tables summers at the Jasper Park Lodge. In his last summer he was assigned to the window tables in the great dining hall. This is where wealthy American guests take their meals. My friend reported he often received tips of $50-100 per week from the Americans, but he deserved them. He was good. Efficient. Diplomatic.

Toward the end of summer he waited for a few weeks at the table of a wealthy California industrialist and his wife and their four boys ages 6 to 16. One evening the industrialist asked: "What's your draft status, son?" My friend replied: "There is no draft in Canada." The man said, "Seriously, and kidding aside," he'd like to know. My friend repeated the fact that there was no Canadian draft; and as he did so, the wife, who had been eyeing her four sons, burst into tears. My friend tactfully withdrew to find duties at other tables.

While perhaps trite or a bit emotional, this may help explain the pleasures of life in Canada the last several years. Not feeling it necessary to police the world, Canada has, as a consequence, escaped Sixties Shock. Thus, many Canadians are not carrying heavy amounts of government-induced emotional baggage in their conscious or their immediate subconscious. This alone contributes to one of the greatest of the pleasures of travel in Canada. Almost always, it's with pleasant people. And in the case of the Canadian National RDC run from Edmonton to Grande Centre, the trip is also thru a pleasant landscape to a pleasant place in a nation still "before Vietnam." When contrasted with some parts of the U.S., this in itself makes up for the lack of speed runs or engaging mountain scenery.

It was a lazy fall Saturday afternoon when I boarded the Grande Centre RDC car at Edmonton's attractive CN station. Competition is rough, with two daily Coachways trips also scheduled along the route of the RDC; and there were only 15 aboard, even tho both SUPER CONTINENTAL trains had made the connection. The car lugged slowly thru the ever-growing Northeast Edmonton suburbs, but once past St. Paul Junction, a few miles out, fell into a brisk lumbering gait, restrained by speed limits to 45-55mph.

Up past the 53rd parallel, fall dusk comes early, and the sun was setting fast as we moved past the small towns of Redwater and Radway. Redwater had been an important oil discovery site in the 1950s Alberta oil boom, but is fading a bit now. To the northwest, the grain elevators can be seen at Egremont, on the Northern Alberta Railway line to Waterways. There is no track connection here; but the sight inspires the mind to wander to the Canadian North on the NAR route. Waterways is the starting point of summer barge-line service that extends north to the Arctic Ocean. Fort McMurray, near the Waterways terminal, is the site of new oil refineries fed by the Athabasca Tar Sands, one of the biggest known oil deposits. However, passenger train service to Waterways is a tough proposition, with NAR's mixed "Muskeg Express" taking 4 days to make the round trip. So I was glad to be aboard the daily RDC car.

East from Smoky Lake, we picked up a few passengers on our outbound run. At one stop, our RDC applied the brakes only after passing a small shelter. The conductor ran to the rear of the car, turned on the rear headlight, and with buzzes on the signal bell, encouraged the engineer to put the car into reverse. Several hundred feet later, an older man climbed aboard. "Really sorry about that," said the conductor, "we just didn't see you at all."

"Ah, that's okay, mate," said the man. "Just glad you came back." I was really beginning to enjoy the pace of the slimly-filled car, and the camaraderie developing among the passengers and the conductor. Just as dusk had faded, I walked to the rear of the car once again, and noted that the rear headlight had been left on, and was producing a vision from Fantasia. As the car wiggled and rocked, the intense headlight beam served as a slight baton directing the movements of thousands of leaves weaving and darting thru the dust wake kicked from the roadbed by the RDC. Wild dashes of yellows, reds and browns leaped and frolicked in and around the beam, encouraged by the rising and falling clouds of dust. I could feel the pressures of the mind bowing to the tranquilizing effect of this display, and stood hypnotized for many minutes.

We sped thru Vilna and Spedden, and despite having been a few minutes late, arrived on time at Abilene Junction. Here the RDC diverts from the Grande Centre line for a 12-mile side trip to St. Paul and return. As the car came to a halt for the switch, the conductor saw the headlight pointing backward into the black infinity, and turned it off before hitting the ballast to sign the register and align the switch. I got off with him for a few whiffs of night air.

Abilene is a place to see the dark side of night. A felt almost lost a few black feet from the RDC, and my mind played tricks, warning: "Don't get too far from the spaceship now. This is a weird planet." But I felt warm and cozy after hopping aboard for the side excursion to St. Paul. I had thought that Abilene might offer a coffee shop where one could wait for 40 minutes should he elect not to make the St. Paul sidetrip, but no such luck--there didn't seem to be even a house within miles.

St. Paul was relatively dark and quiet when we arrived to deposit a few passengers. During the 10-minute layover, I took photos with my tripod while crew and agent exchanged coffee. Each seemed to be thoroughly enjoying the company of his fellow employee. Quickly we were off to retrace our steps, and on time to the minute, set out from Abilene Junction east for Grande Centre on the "main track" once again. Some 36 miles later, our RDC horn seeming to echo across the landscape from all directions, we whistled into Bonnyville to put off the last of the passengers except myself. Bonnyville has been suffering some English-French tensions, but all was quiet in this small community as we passed.

As we rolled on to Grande Centre, I became "old friends" with the conductor. He explained that the Grande Centre line had been intended to proceed into Saskatchawan to connect with the CN line at St. Walburg, but that construction had halted south of the Beaver River several miles short of Grande Centre when the depression hit. The line was not built into Grande Centre until the 1950s, partially to help the nearby air base at Cold Lake fight the Cold War. But even today the Grande Centre-St. Walburg gap remains unbuilt.

Unlike Amtrak's PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL, which wyes at Vancouver, B.C. with the passengers aboard, the RDC usually heads directly into Grande Centre if there are passengers. But tonight, at my request, the crew took the car around the wye first, and then backed in to the attractive block station. The crew seemed to appreciate the fact that they had thus saved several minutes of duty time, and they could get off work faster. It is perhaps a third of a mile to the hotel at Grande Centre, and I could look back at the still-glowing car over open fields as I trudged into town.

Grande Centre is neither Grand, nor is it very central. It is at the far northeast corner of the Alberta Prairies. A few miles north the road system ends, and there are no settlements beyond where the landscape turns to scrub forest and muskeg. With a population of perhaps 5,000, Grande Centre survives because of the air base and services to farms. A more appropriate name would probably be Modest Periphery. Would there be Canadian Graffiti, they would be here, but a late dinner Saturday night

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Blue Ridge

by Ken Maylath

No other train in the Amtrak timetable, it would seem, can boast the twists and turns, ups and downs, ins and outs and variety-packed career of the little consist now known as the BLUE RIDGE--formerly the POTOMAC SPECIAL--informally known as the Harley Staggers Limited (Harley Staggers being the Congressman of long standing from Keyser, West Virginia, a small town not far from Cumberland, Maryland). Mr. Staggers's powerful voice on Capitol Hill undoubtedly played no small part in the decision to make the 351-mile run from Washington to Parkersburg, WV one of the first additions to the basic Amtrak system--only a few months after A-day on May 1, 1971.

Not only that, but just a few months after the start of operations over the curving track of the B&O, one of the two United Aircraft Turbos was placed in service on the run. This move resulted in nationwide publicity about the Turbo that "ran to nowhere" at the cost of considerable red ink on Amtrak's ledgers. By May of 1972 that phase of the train's career was at an end as the Turbo went on display at Transpo 72, then back to the New York-Boston route.

In early 1973 Amtrak decided that Harley Staggers or no, enough was enough. And so it was that the little train thru the mountains was given its burial notice--with 30 days warning. It was the first Amtrak run to gain that distinction after the short-lived LAKE SHORE from New York to Chicago. Even the most dyed-in-the-wool rail supporters had to admit that there were more important priorities for the cash-short NRPC than the lightly populated mountains of northern West Virginia. And the train, west of Cumberland at least, was hardly setting any patronage records.

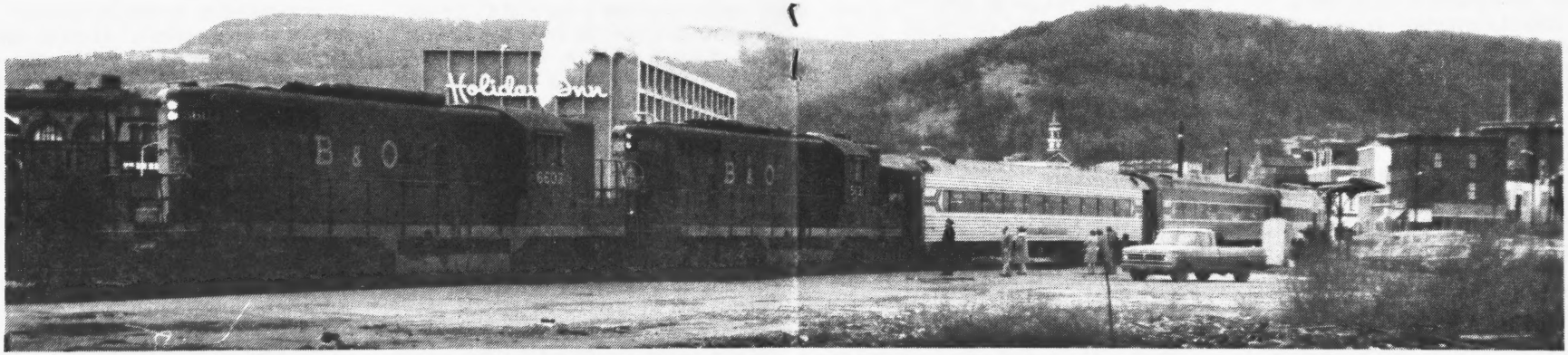
Those writing obituaries for the SPECIAL seemed to overlook one significant factor: that hardy species known as the rail commuter. Thru the '60s in particular the characteristic of hardiness was often a necessity, what with declining service and equipment that would be more at home in a museum than on a real train. The westbound run especially, leaving Washington around 5:00, was well filled with 50 to70-mile commuters who preferred the pastoral life of the Potomac Valley to the bustle of the Washington suburbs. And they preferred the SPECIAL to later and slower B&O-operated RDC runs. You couldn't blame them for picking Amtrak's arrival in Martinsburg after 90 minutes--before 6:30--rather than the B&O's 8pm arrival after a 15-minute longer journey.

They kicked up a fuss and succeeded in rousing the interest of the press and government officials. Amtrak gave the SPECIAL a temporary reprieve and said it could be permanent if Maryland and West Virginia would pick up 2/3 of the loss. First Maryland and then West Virginia agreed to it, and when the dust settled, the SPECIAL was running only to Cumberland, 146 miles from Washington, with a new name, the BLUE RIDGE. The eastbound run was rescheduled to provide a more convenient arrival time in D.C. for the commuters--the people without whom Amtrak's only use of B&O tracks would now be a memory.

So much for history. In all of the trials and tribulations surrounding the run, one thing never changed, basically--the weekend schedule. Rather than inbound to Washington in the morning and outbound in the evening, the reverse was and is true. Outbound in the morning--Sat., Sun., holidays--departing from the Capitol at 11am. The evening return to Washington on those days has varied--but it has always been after 7pm. Commuters are certainly not filling the train on weekends. Who is, if anybody? Especially with service now terminating at Cumberland, eliminating even the few who used to ride beyond there.

I sought an answer to that question as the old year turned to new--my first experience over the line since Jan., 1973, and the first since Cumberland became the end of the run.

I had another reason for my trip at this time. It was the first weekend of (believe it or not) augmented service. Back in the days of the Parkersburg operation a second set of equipment was used outbound on Saturday and back on Sunday. It was unavoidable. But with a run of just 3 hours to Cumberland, it was possible to use just one trainset--by deadheading: down from Cumberland Saturday morning for the 11am departure from Washington and another deadhead move on Sunday evening back to Cumberland to be ready for the 5:18am run to Washington on Monday morning. Catching wind of this procedure, Maryland Senator J. Glenn Beall and a labor leader suggested in mid-December that passengers be carried on the deadhead runs. Why not, in these days of energy crisis? Amtrak's answer came with uncustomary swiftness. Yes--with about 2 days notice before the first passenger-carrying departures. A 5:18am start from Cumberland on Saturday morning, similar to the weekday schedule, and a 9:30pm departure from Washington on Sunday evening, arriving in Cumberland at 12:35am. Just like that, less than 2 weeks after the original request, 292 new weekly miles on the Amtrak timetables. Of course, hardly anyone outside the immediate area



The BLUE RIDGE at Cumberland: another view of the scene shown on our cover. Photo by Ken Maylath.

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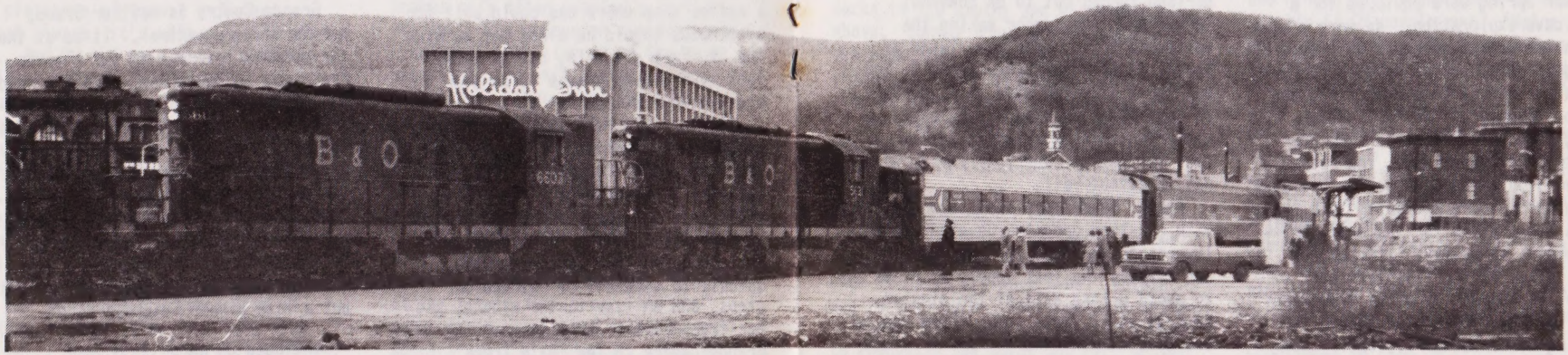

The BLUE RIDGE at Cumberland: another view of the scene shown on our cover. Photo by Ken Maylath.

would have any reasonable way to know of its existence right away.

Waiting this Sunday morning on a track right next to the high level Metroliner platform of Washington's Union Station were 2 diesel units--an Amtrak-painted A unit and a GP with B&O markings--followed by 3 cars. All cars were refurbished, so couldn't be identified right off, but presented no problems to an observer of the rail scene. In the middle was one of those former C&O "glamour" coaches with distinctive partition in the middle. One end contained the snack counter with several tables--eating accommodations more extensive than on many a heavily traveled Northeast Corridor train. The other coaches were 72-seat former New Haven lightweights from about 1950. More than 160 seats in all--no doubt well-filled with commuters on weekdays.

As we slipped out of Union Station right on time, all those seats were not required. Not that the consist was empty. I was one of a handful in the passenger end of the former C&O coach, but there were another 30 or so riding in the rear car. We were joined by another 20 who boarded at Silver Spring, swelling the total to over 50. On a Sunday morning, it could have been much worse.

Historic Harpers Ferry is a favorite destination of weekend BLUE RIDGE riders from Washington. The little community has become quite a tourist attraction in recent years and boasts boating, hiking, camping and caves in its vicinity. Indeed, four young men who climbed on at Silver Spring were equipped for a day of cave exploration. We were a couple minutes behind schedule as a good 20 passengers piled off at Harpers Ferry--even in the middle of winter. Another 15 or so dropped off at Martinsburg, leaving a count of 18 making the complete trip to Cumberland. The recently restored stop at Hancock saw no business. Leaving Martinsburg 2 minutes late, we clicked along at 55 for the most part--no problems, no delays. I noted how several miles of the line just east of Paw Paw, WV (about 115 miles from Washington) had been relocated around the beginning of World War I. Until then

the B&O had faithfully followed the twists and turns of the river there. The relocation, with the help of 3 tunnels and a couple trestles, reduced the distance and the running time.

We slipped past the huge yards on the east end of Cumberland and into the remains of the Cumberland station a full 7 minutes ahead of schedule, attesting to our trouble-free run. I say remains because most of the train sheds and platforms are gone. Just one platform--all that's needed these days, but equipped with water and steam connections for the coaches. Gone also is the historic Queen City Hotel, landmark to B&O travelers for a century. A scattering of bricks marks the spot--steps from the station platform. A few more steps bring one to the small wood frame building housing Amtrak's ticket office and waiting room. The temperature was in the mid-30s with virtually no snow in Cumberland that day. Time to hunt up one of the few open businesses in the downtown area for some food. First, I watched detaching of the diesels, which were run by the train and on to the B&O shops. They were replaced by 2 different units, a GP7 and GP9, both lettered B&O, for the return trip.

Indeed, the units didn't back on the train until 10 minutes before the 4:25 departure time. No matter. With steam connections available the cars were warm enough for the passengers who started finding their way aboard well before it was time to leave. As I had suspected, the crowd out of Cumberland turned out to be somewhat larger than the number making the westbound trip. More than twice as large, as it turned out--over 40. Not bad for a city the size of Cumberland. We left right on time as the early winter darkness started to settle over the valley (daylight saving time not in effect yet).

Again, operations went smoothly. With a rather generous 65-minute allowance to Hancock, the engineer loafed and coasted the last couple of miles to avoid a long wait at the station. Just as well, since again there was no business at Hancock. A handful boarding at Martinsburg brought the passenger count close to the maximum of the westbound trip. Then, Harpers Ferry, and an even larger crowd was waiting than the number dropped at noon time. At least 30. The total aboard was now at least 80. About half said goodbye to the train at Silver Spring. A few made the transfer in Washington, as I did, to the 8pm Metroliner. As for the BLUE RIDGE, it slipped into Union Station just inside the 5-minute tolerance for on-time arrival. We would have been right on the money except for a back-in move to the station--no doubt done to avoid switching costs and save time in readying the train for its first Sunday evening run back to Cumberland.

All in all, it was a pleasant ride. The refurbished coaches are pleasant, of course, and reasonably free of defects. The heat, in both directions, was just about right. No complaints about the crew--a young snack bar attendant and veteran B&O trainmen. (The trainmen change at Brunswick, and do it in 30 seconds.)

B&O track maintenance is fairly good--a brief rough spot here and there. Running times have not deteriorated from the last years of the B&O-operated service. It's quite a scenic ride, too.

The weekend version of the BLUE RIDGE is not Amtrak's most heavily-traveled, longest, fanciest or most important train by far. But it does provide a useful service to the Potomac Valley. A couple of the communities served have no other public transportation. Few could argue with the reasonableness of dropping the Cumberland to Parkersburg segment--except as part of a thru route to Cincinnati. But, I for one am glad a way was found to maintain service between Washington and Cumberland--for the commuters and for those making a weekend journey. And it's kind of a bargain at that. The $8 fare for the whole 146 miles is 75¢ less than the B&O was charging when Amtrak took over--back when the cost of living was lower.

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showed only a few cars quietly "cruisin' the main" and I was asleep soon after dinner.

* * *

Sunday morning broke bright and clear, and the sun was just peeping over the horizon as I walked back out of town to the station. The RDC car seemed elegantly placed between some cattle to the north and a pond of ducks to the south; and migrating geese above. Sunday morning was good for business, and several passengers, including a number of young people, climbed aboard for the 7:10am departure.

The crew recognized me immediately, and having me spotted as a train buff, invited me to the front platform, opposite the engineer, for a better ride. The old baggageman's wood chair, still a part of the RDC's equipment, served as my parlour car seat. And a better ride it could not have been! Autumn was in full swing, and pheasants driven to sudden flight by our passing seemed to emphasize the golds and rich browns of the harvest countryside.

We picked up passengers at every other stop or so, and the engineer told me how much the crews resented the notices at the stations along the line that CN planned to discontinue six "f" stops on the Grande Centre line for the winter timetable. He told me in no uncertain terms that he, and every other RDC operator he knew, planned to stop at each "f" stop whether it was in the timetable or not, and hinted that there would be union trouble if CN complained. "We're not going to pass anybody up on this run," he said sternly. "This train needs all the business it can get." But other than this show of defiance, the only harshness I encountered on the trip, it was a warm and beautiful day; with much smiling and hugging on the little wooden station platforms as friends and relatives saw off the passengers. We drifted thru scenes that could be Rockwell covers on the old Saturday Evening Post, or perhaps Currier & Ives prints, and soon were

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going to be 45 minutes late (she finally showed an hour behind.) The big Amtrak units whistled that good sound for the Garey Avenue crossing and glided to a stop. There were engines 500, 509 and 506; 5 high-level coaches (one non-refurbished); both coach and 1st class diners and lounges; sleepers "Pine Mesa," "Indian Mesa," "Pine Gorge," and "Regal Inn"; car 2694, an old Budd SUNSET LIMITED sleeper; and an ex-Pennsy baggage car on the rear in Amtrak colors. As I stepped up, I noticed snow lingering in the vestibule. Quite a night, eh?

There is always a very different atmosphere on board a train between excitement of departure (as with the SUNSET LIMITED last night) and the feeling a passenger gets during the last few hours into the terminal. A sort of subdued anticipation. I felt it immediately upon boarding.

The train picks up speed as it has for two days now, the familiar motion bringing us those last few miles. Pack things up, we'll be getting off soon. Bags piled high in the vestibules, but still serving breakfast in the diner out of Pomona. Dirty windows in the dome, and low conversation. People reading this morning's L.A. Times, put on the train at San Bernardino, complements of Amtrak.

"What's the temperature outside?" someone asks. This train left Chicago Christmas Eve, and those aboard spent the holiday going to or coming from. The train ran light, with most bedrooms empty (at least at this end). Thru Pasadena, and I wondered what does the SUPER CHIEF do when it encounters the Rose Parade? It crosses Colorado Blvd right at the start of it. We twisted thru South Pasadena and across the high bridge over the Pasadena Freeway. The porter in a sleeper showed me the inside of one of the refurbished bedrooms. The "wood grain panelling" was already peeling from the walls--just stick-on paper. Altho this car was ex-SP, the upper berth ladder was stenciled "Swatara Rapids," off the Pennsy. The porter said it didn't even fit.

Then, into the throat of the terminal again, coming in on track 10. Over on track 7 was the COAST STARLIGHT ready to leave. All hustle and bustle here, just 10 minutes before departure. "Where is car 1411?" "Right up ahead, ma'am." The sounds were the rattle of baggage carts being pushed and the escape of steam. Many people clambering aboard, as this was the day after Christmas.

Checking out the sleepers on the rear, I found a scenic pattern. I could relax in my "Pacific Lodge" by the "Indian Lake" of "Blue Water." A gentleman was out by his roomette window, gazing up at it. He produced a cloth, and with a long reach, proceeded to clean off the grime. Remember, this was the starting point for the train. Each time I've seen the train this month (about 7 times) it was dirty. Our man did a good job, too. Satisfied, he made an anti-Amtrak comment and went inside. I followed, but turned the other way and twisted thru "Blue Water." The bedrooms and compartments of this ex-Santa Fe car are set in the middle for easier riding, with the roomettes on either end.

Egress from LAUPT found me in the diner. Not a regular, it was SP #10208, original name "Golden Nectar." The interior was still decorated with desert wildflowers. Very nice despite its age. Four and two seating gave the waiters plenty of room to serve. Sitting down near the kitchen, I could hear the crew passing orders: "Give me an omelette with ham." "Blueberry pancakes." "Right on." Crash, clank, tinkle. There were no tablecloths at breakfast, just paper place mats with the Amtrak logo, but we did have a pink carnation. The waiter came, depositing the menus and wearing a blue Turbo button with a picture of the French units. Nice. Returning in a few moments, the waiter took a verbal order! Voila!! Is Amtrak getting smart? An innovation? But no, it was only his way of speeding up the order, as the steward wrote up a check later. However, it was a fine gesture, and I saw him doing the same at another table. I had my standard #3 breakfast with sausage links substituted for the ham. This day, the steam gave out in the kitchen, and coffee was delayed until the end of the meal. But I like the Amtrak blue pot as it holds two full cups--plus.

After Glendale, the diner rapidly filled, even tho it was already way past 10:00. A patron next to me had his order delivered, then yanked away by another waiter with the explanation that it was the wrong order. This, after the one dining had begun eating the selection he ordered. Who knows the mixup, but an identical plate of food was presented 10 minutes later. All in all, tho, the food was up to standard, and the coffee was quite good.

Sixty-six miles from Los Angeles, we pulled to a stop in good old Oxnard. I got off, having chalked up 14,074 miles, 4,231 of them on the STARLIGHT. My year's train riding was complete.

(continued from page 13)

back at Abilene Junction, for the diversion down to St. Paul.

One "f" stop en route to St. Paul is Owlseye. The engineer said that an old repairman from St. Paul who lived in Owlseye had an auto that worked only half the time; and that this fellow actually "commuted" on the RDC car at times, taking the RDC into St. Paul on its Edmonton-bound morning trip, and returning in the evening to Owlseye as the RDC was en route to Grande Centre. "He's so good, his boss doesn't fire him for these odd hours," said the engineer.

The car picked up more passengers, and had perhaps 35 or more as BAM! - POW! we rode over two torpedoes. "Frighten you?" asked the engineer. "Well, I was startled a little," I replied from my "parlour" seat. "Just that freight ahead switching," he said. "I knew he was there, but they keep you on your toes."

It was a wonderful morning to drink in the native values of rural life, and I regretted seeing the new office towers of Edmonton gradually showing over the curvature of the earth. The first to tell is the new Alberta Government Telephone building, looking a lot like the Hartford Building on San Francisco's California Street. As much as I would have liked to have stretched it out, the trip was over, on time, at 11:35am in the shadow of the CN tower, and I was back to a grey, office-bureaucratic, normalcy-stricken reality.

* * *

Mayor Ivor Dent of Edmonton several months later made a cause celebre of the Grande Centre run at the discontinuance hearings. I am still hoping His Worship will have been able to help keep it going. It is just too fine an experience to see disappear in the pleasant, antebellum north that is Canada's prairies region today.

(P.S.: At the last minute, CN dropped its plan to eliminate the "f" stops, and they are still in the schedule.)

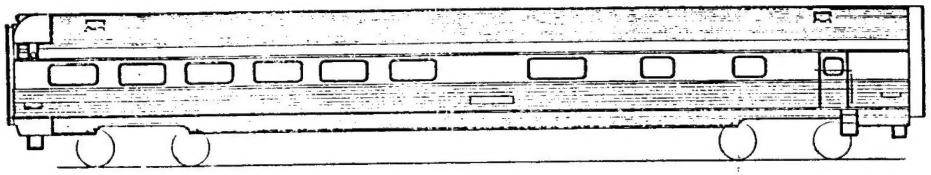
ANNOUNCING A NEW WAY OF SUPPORTING RTN

Many readers would like to support RTN, but find the ways limited. They have nothing to advertise for sale, and would like to contribute financially more than their subscription rate. Therefore, we are inaugurating a new advertising section called RTN ADVERTISING SPONSORS, in which the cost of one listing of a sponsor's name is $10.00, the same as a regular full-page ad. The sponsor's name and city will be listed, or "anonymous" if desired. Remittances can be sent to Message Media, Dept. RTN, Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709. Thank you.

Announcing a New Book Covering Railway Passenger Cars:

RAILWAY PASSENGER CAR ANNUAL

Volume I - 1973-1974



Contains car by car rosters of all rail passenger cars in revenue service on the U.S. and Canadian Railroads and Transit Systems during 1973.

Each car is listed in numerical order under the owning railroad or Transit Authority for easy identification. Prior numbers, ownership, rebuilding, builder and date built is shown.

Includes all Intercity and Commuter passenger cars owned by: Alaska Railroad, Amtrak, Autoliner, Autotrain, Boston & Maine, British Columbia, Burlington Northern, Canadian National (Including GO Transit), Canadian Pacific, Central of New Jersey, Chessie System, The Milwaukee Road, Chicago & North Western, Rock Island, Chicago South Shore & South Bend, Denver & Rio Grande Western, Erie Lackawanna, Georgia, Illinois Central Gulf, Long Island, Norfolk & Western, Ontario Northland, Penn Central, Pennsylvania Reading Seashore Lines, Pittsburgh & Lake Erie, Reading, Southern, Southern Pacific, and Union Pacific. All Penn Central and Amtrak cars are cross indexed to prior numbers since they haven't been fully renumbered. Indicates cars owned by NJDOT, MTA, and SEPTA.

Includes all Rapid Transit and Streetcars owned by: MBTA (Boston), NYCTA (New York), SIRT (Staten Island), PATH (New York), TofNJ (Newark), PATCO (Philadelphia), SEPTA (Including Red Arrow), PAT (Pittsburgh), CTS (Cleveland), SHRT (Shaker Heights, Ohio), CTA (Chicago), NOPS (New Orleans), Leonard's Dept. Store (Ft. Worth), El Paso City Lines, BART, and San Francisco's MUNI (Including Cable Cars), MUCTC (Montreal), Expo Express, and the TTC (Toronto). Also includes the Seattle Alweg Monorail.

Be in the know about passenger cars in service. Small 9"x 6" size is easy to carry around. 144 pages, softbound, is priced at only $ 5.00 pp. Will be ready for mailing early in March.

Order From: RPC Publications, P. O. Box 211, Park Forest, Ill., 60466.

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Bay Area Electric Railroad Association

INCORPORATED

OAKLAND SAN FRANCISCO BERKELEY

February 15, 1974

TO ALL RTN READERS:

Consider this a cordial invitation to join us March 9 & 10 for the first weekend of service on AMTRAK Trains 710 & 711, the SAN JOAQUIN. The Bay Area Electric Railroad Association will run special cars, including Private Car LA CONDESA, Oakland to Bakersfield and return. Fare of $50.00 per person includes round trip rail fare, double occupancy motel room at Bakersfield, and transfer between the station and the RAMADA INN in both directions.

The following weekend, March 16 & 17, we will operate special cars and the LA CONDESA from Oakland to Sparks and return on the rear of the SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR. Fare of $55.00 per person includes round trip rail fare and double occupancy motel room at the NUGGET Motel & Casino, convenient to the Sparks Depot.

The LA CONDESA is a 1926 Pullman-built Observation with comfortable lounge and private accommodations. It was rebuilt from AT&SF Cafe Lounge 1512 in 1958 and features roller bearings, tightlock couplers and modern steam heat.

For further information and reservations, pick up the phone and dial our 24-hour number: (415) 673-6547. OR, write JOHN C. PLYTNICK, Excursion Manager, 3141 Franklin St. #11, San Francisco, CA 94123.

mixed train of thoughts

AMTRAK'S EAST COAST timetables for Jan. 6, which got around about Jan. 31, reveal the addition of names for the N.Y.-Buffalo "Empire Service" trains, namely, the HENRY HUDSON, SALT CITY EXPRESS, WATER LEVEL EXPRESS, DEWITT CLINTON and EMPIRE STATE EXPRESS. The "expresses" aren't really, but make all stops..... SHOULD THE DOT make a recommendation to Amtrak--rather, a designation to Amtrak for the new experimental route for this year, and should it be the Water Level route that our readers in the aggregate prefer, Amtrak will have to reverse its present thinking. It is said that Amtrak has been planning to add another Chicago-New York train, but on the same route as the BROADWAY LIMITED, leaving a couple hours earlier and named perhaps the LIBERTY LIMITED. It prefers not to have to open a whole new set of stations, but then how can it serve the millions of Midwesterners who now can't reach a train and are forced onto more energy-extravagant carriers? We will all be watching this situation, of course, with close interest. Incidentally, the plot thickens about trying to circumvent the experimental route requirement (as reported here last issue). Rumor has it that Amtrak as well as the DOT was toying with the idea that it might consider the Little Rock and San Joaquin trains as fulfilling the experimental requirement, but have decided that another route must be named, Thus, the unconfirmed report is that the DOT will name a new route, and probably sooner than later. (The DOT's annual report on Amtrak comes out in March).....

* * *

STATE OF MICHIGAN wants a Detroit-Jackson train from Amtrak. May 17 is the target date set for the running of the Chicago-Port Huron train--on PC Chicago-Battle Creek and on GTW Battle Creek-Port Huron. The train will use standard equipment refurbished by the Kratville shops..... SLUMBERCOACHES WILL BE back on the EMPIRE BUILDER and the SFZ in late May after their winter running on the Florida trains..... AMTRAK HAS INHERITED the 200- and 600-series trains which were in dispute, over whether they were commuter or Amtrak-type runs..... RETURN OF REDWOOD? California state assembly rules committee on Feb. 11 passed a resolution urging that Amtrak restore passenger service on the Northwestern Pacific route between San Francisco and Eureka. The NWP, affiliate of SP, got to drop its then bi-weekly REDWOOD RDC car (Willits to Eureka) when Amtrak took over. Incidentally, the railroad, along the scenic Eel River, suffered much damage in the rains that also wiped out the SP line at Dunsmuir, CA..... TRANSPORTATION SECRETARY BRINEGAR on Feb. 1 issued his report on recommendations for the United States Railway Association, to "revitalize" the PC network. His report is to be published in the Federal Register Feb. 12. It is reported that Albert V. Casey, president of the Times Mirror Co. that publishes the L.A. Times, is a leading contender for chairman of the USRA.....

* * *

SAN DIEGO IS acquiring the attractive Santa Fe depot under a grant from UMTA, and will turn it into an attractive "transit hub" with a theme like Ghirardelli Square in San Francisco, with shops and transit museum exhibits. All bus lines, (Greyhound, San Diego Transit, etc.) will be brought under one roof where the Amtrak station now sits..... THE GULF WIND could run again, if Florida rail promoters win out. Amtrak officials agreed to look intothe feasibility of reinstating the Tallahassee-New Orleans run..... AMTRAK'S PASSENGER REVENUES have been running a whopping 40% above 1972, for the months of November and December. Until those months, calls to Amtrak were running about 40,000 per month, but climbed well above 60,000 during the holiday season..... THE OLD SP Niles depot, now freight-only, pictured on the cover of our First January issue, is likely to be closed. Hearings are now being held on the railroad-wanted economizing, and there doesn't seem to be a great deal of opposition.....

AUTO-TRAIN MAGAZINE is the latest publicrelations effort of the car/people-carrying corporation. The first 75¢ issue, all color, is the Nov/Dec/Jan one, and is handed out free to patrons. A mail subscription to the quarterly costs $3, from Auto-Train Corp., 1801 K St. N.W., Washington DC 20006. The first issue, ironically, has a colorful feature story on Harpers Ferry, VA, which, as you know, you reach by competitor Amtrak's BLUE RIDGE..... THE AIRLINE INFLUENCE on Amtrak, and Amtrak's new energy crisis-inspired ex-airline riders, came out in two humorous incidents around New Year's: "On which runway does the SUPER CHIEF leave?" asked a green client at L.A.'s Union Station. And an Amtrak employee, who should know better, called a service facility somewhere in the system about a dirty train, reporting a "dirty fuselage" on the vehicle..... GRAND TRUNK WESTERN has 5 heavyweight 500-series UP coaches running on its burgeoning commuter line out of Detroit.....

* * *

SP'S SISKIYOU LINE in Oregon has just been reopened after many weeks of blockage due to winter weather conditions. It prevented a possible detour of the COAST STARLIGHT thru the now-freight line when other routes were blocked also in January. ..... AMTRAK ANNOUNCED ON Jan. 16 that it will build a terminal for auto-carrying cars for the FLORIDIAN 6½ miles southwest of Kissimmee, Florida on a 25-acre plot at US highway 17-92 in the Poinciana Community development. Late spring is the target date for startup of service, and cars will be carried to Union Terminal in Indianapolis. Meanwhile, Auto-Train, in the aforementioned magazine, pictures its newly-planned route on a map, marked "subject to ICC approval", between Louisville and Nahunta..... WILLIAM H. MOORE, the former head of Penn Central, mentioned as "stepping down" in our last issue, was actually fired, reports the Washington Star-News..... 200 PERSONS DAILY would have to ride a revived DEL MONTE between San Francisco and the Monterey Peninsula in order for it to turn a profit, says Ed Haber, head of a citizens committee to restore the train discontinued on A-day. SP said the train was losing $172,000 a year and carrying 22 per day near the end. Harry C. Johnston, Amtrak's Western Regional Manager, said the idea of revival is a "reasonable" one, but would make no guarantees..... STATE OF OREGON wants Amtrak to extend its Seattle-Portland corridor trains south to Eugene. This is one of several Oregon rail plans that seems to have some good chance of succeeding.....

* * *

NORFOLK TO CINCINNATI route has been requested of Amtrak by officials from Virginia and West Virginia. It would run on N&W lines..... A DETAILED STORY on that diesel that was set loose by vandals on the MONTREALER route last Oct. 21 appears on page 1 of the NY Times travel section (Feb. 10). Well done, but one ommission: it doesn't mention the Amtrak train..... ROCK ISLAND RAILROAD will soon apply for government loans to upgrade its track roadbed and equipment..... GENERAL MOTORS RAN a full-page ad in the Wall Street Journal Feb. 7, including a big Amtrak logo, certainly the largest one yet to appear in the WSJ. The ad gloats that "Amtrak chose General Motors to build all the new diesels for its nationwide rail system"..... SPEAKING OF NEW Amtrak diesels, make a correction on p. 17 of last issue: Amtrak isn't placing its second order for diesels in March, but rather ordered them months ago, and will start receiving them in March, with all 110 due by the end of July..... CASSANDRAS OF THE energy crunch--Time Magazine's term for railfans? What does it mean? Quoth M. D. Monaghan, Cassandra was a daughter of the King of Troy, and the god Apollo gave her the gift of prophecy but later declared in anger than no one should believe her prophecies. Dr. Monaghan also points out our error last issue: it's not the TEXAS CHIEF but the St. Louis-Laredo train that Dallas and Ft. Worth are squabbling about. The routing thru Ft. Worth was finally chosen, but Dallas had a plan to cross the two trains there with thru cars from the TEXAS CHIEF being switched to the St. Louis train, giving Ft. Worth and points north access to both routes south with no change of cars. Monaghan complains that the chosen arrangement means a longer running time instead of a bus connection from Ft. Worth. Space doesn't allow us to do this justice here; you can be certain you'll hear more about this later.....

QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"The improvements recommended in our report should also benefit passenger service. Some lines that carry both passenger and freight will have improved track, signals and other facilities. We would expect that the heavy concentration of passenger operations in the Northeast region will require that this service be given special consideration in the formulation of the final system plan."

--Transportation Secretary Claude Brinegar at press conference presenting DOT recommendations for rail service levels under the Regional Rail Reorganization Act, Feb. 1.

"Other than the splendid little run past Dorena Lake on the Village Green steam excursion out of Cottage Grove, I had never been on a train. Five hours on a siding should be enough to keep me in the friendly skies forever. It isn't. The hazards of winter travel through the mountains befell us. So did, however, the rebirth of train service in the United States."--Sports Editor Blaine Newnham in the Eugene, OR Register-Guard, describing trip on COAST STARLIGHT, Feb. 10

"Apparently Amtrak officials decided that getting passenger train service to Dallas is more important at this time than the quality of service it will provide. We might reluctantly concede the point. However, when it comes time to evaluating whether the service is successful, the warnings of the Dallas City-County Amtrak Committee ought to be remembered." --Dallas Times Herald editorial, Feb. 6

SLIP OF THE MONTH CLUB***

"In Connecticut, Charles Moffett of Bethel, leaped from his 1972 car, which was straddling the tracks, before a 10-passenger train from Danbury destroyed it."

--New York Times, Feb. 6

(Imagine the overkill a 100-passenger train would have had!)

"June 6: Senate committee proposed $125 Amtrak budget for 1973-1974."

--Rail Travel Newsletter, First January Issue

(Hardly enough for a one-way airline ticket for Roger Lewis.)

TWO NEW SLIDE SETS are now available from Northwest Rail Images: "Milwaukee Road Electrification in 1973" and "Four Canadian Railways," a look at passenger and freight subjects of the Ontario Northland, Algoma Central, Northern Alberta and British Columbia Railways. Each set is 25 duplicate slides for $6.00. Or send 25¢ for a sample slide and list of 16 sets to Northwest Rail Images, 4891 Donald Street, Eugene, Oregon 97405.

TRAVEL AMTRAK - and those living in Southern California CALL upon Let's Travel, be it a trip to San Diego or New York. Ride new San Joaquin Valley Service. Reserve early - quick tickets by mail - collect calls accepted for definite reservations. Let's Travel Tours, P O Box 146, Perris, CA 92370. (714)657-4785.

RIDE AND PHOTOGRAPH the "new" Toronto PCC streetcars in San Francisco. Special car leaves Geneva Carhouse 10 am Saturday April 13th. $6.00 for tickets ordered by April 6th. $6.50 thereafter. Sponsored by Orange Empire Trolley Museum, P O Box 548, Perris, CA 92370.

RTN'S BOOK "FIND" for February is "Cable Car" by Christopher Swan--attractive, detailed story of San Francisco cable cars. Unusual photos, historical shots, foldouts, etc. 126-page paperback 6x9" published by Ten Speed Press, Berkeley, for last year's cable car anniversary. Send $3.95 plus 25¢ mailing to Message Media, Book Dept., Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709. Californians please add tax.

Express Ads

THE FAST MAIL, newsletter of the Twentieth Century Railroad Club, still only costs $2.75 for a one year (12 issues) subscription. BUT, not for long! On March 1 our rates are going up to $3.25, due to postal and printing cost increases. Do not miss your chance for this great bargain, filled with news of AMTRAK, informative articles, transit news and more. Your money will be fully refunded if you are not satisfied with the first issue. Send check for $2.75 today to: The Fast Mail, Dept. 1, 10700 Seeley Ave., Chicago, IL, 60643.

WANT TO REALLY DO SOMETHING TO HELP THE PASSENGER TRAIN? We've got just the answers for your problems: Naptras. What's Naptras? We're helping to make the trains worth traveling again, thru advertising, personal appearances, and by helping in financing rail passenger service thru Chambers of Commerce. Write Us: Naptras, Scott Rogers, Public Relations Officer, RR 3, Freeport, IL 61032. Remember, We're helping to make the trains worth traveling again.

A SUPERPOWER PORTRAIT. 11 x 29 drawing of Pere Marquette Berkshire 1225. From ATS detector to crosshead nuts, no detail has been overlooked. On your wall for only $2.00. Proceeds go to rebuild 1225 for excursion service. MSU Railroad Club, MSU Museum, East Lansing, MI 48824.

TIMETABLES: Reading Company, Pennsylvania-Reading Seashore Lines public timetables from late 1950's and early 1960's. Extensive listing for 8¢ stamp. Robert L. Eastwood, Jr., P. O. Box 41, Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006.

RAILROAD SLIDES: Many different, high quality Kodak duplicate 35mm color slides of railroad passenger equipment, both commuter and long distance, from United States and Canada. $1.00 brings listing and two sample slides, plus 50¢ coupon good on first order. Ask for List S-36. Locomotive slides available too. Providing more than 4,000 different railroad slides since 1967. Robert L. Eastwood, Jr., P. O. Box 41, Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006.

SOMETHING SPECIAL!! Fernwood, Columbia and Gulf Railroad passenger tickets. Card size. Excellent condition. A real bargain at 75¢ each or 2 for $1.00. Jack Ferry, 10041 S. Prairie Avenue, Chicago, Ill. 60628.

MAKE PLANS to attend the National Association of Timetable Collectors second railroadiana BOURSE. Spend a day browsing among the many tables of timetables, hardware, calendars, books and everything of railroad interest. It will be held at the George Washington Motor Lodge, U.S.#1 and the Penna. Turnpike, Trevose, Pa., on April 20, from 9AM to 5PM. Tables available for those wishing to sell. For information and a descriptive flyer, send a card to Bob Russell, 2737 Haven Ave., Ocean City, N.J. 08226.

WANTED TO BUY: Railroad ticket envelopes and baggage tags. Also want any L&N Passenger & Dining Service items. Will also trade for L&N ticket envelopes, baggage tags, and IC train switch list forms. Will also sell above items. Don Clayton, 331 Park Avenue, Madisonville, KY 42431.

QUALITY B&W NEGATIVES: 35mm, 2¼x2¼, 616 negatives of many major lines, shortlines and industrials. All negs fine-grain processed. Cabs, switchers & pass. units. PC, SOU, NW, SP, BN, FP&E, D&R, GN&A, MRR, P&LE, WM, B&O, C&O, EL, L&S, E&M, KCS, P&S, C&I, etc. List & sample 50¢. T.N. Colbert, 1008 Englewood, Parma, OH 44134.

OUTWIT AMTRAK EQUIPMENT FAILURES with our do-it-yourself flexible steam line. Be the envy of passengers in neighboring cars as you relax in steam-heated comfort while they freeze due to leaks and blockages. Plastic line coils conveniently into suitcase, attaches to any diesel steam generator. Complete instructions. AMTRAK CITIZEN REPAIR KITS, INC. Box NRPC, c/o this newsletter.